

# Outcry as Ministry distributes damaged books to school kids



The state of some of the used textbooks distributed by the Ministry of Education to school children. Most of the pages in the books are scribbled with answers while some others are damaged and unsuitable for study purposes.

Muhannad Mansour/DTNN  
news@dt.bh

## Manama

The Education Ministry's decision to reuse school textbooks this academic year has raised a public outcry with parents alleging that the Ministry distributed badly tampered textbooks unfit for study.

"Most of the pages are scribbled with answers and marked by teachers. It will be difficult for students to study these textbooks," said Um Mohammed, a Bahraini mother of a five grader.

"The exercise books that are usually given with the main subject books such as English and science are new. But the main books, which the students are asked to find the answers from, are mostly used and not in a good condition," Um Mohammed said.

"The new and used textbooks come stamped, marking as new and used," she said, adding: "The stamps, however, don't give parents the liberty of choosing as they are only for information purposes."

This is the second year in a row the Ministry of Education is distributing used textbooks for academic purposes. While the students are happy that they received the books at the start of the new school year, several parents complained that the books distributed were damaged and not fit for use by students for academic purposes.

"How such books are handed over to students who are expected to be educated and are tasked to develop our country and its future. The questions in the books are fully answered. How do we expect students

to learn from these books? The Education Ministry has the second biggest share of the State budget. Where is the Ministry's budget?," another parent who preferred anonymity asked.

The distribution of used textbooks is the result of a new policy adopted by the Ministry of Education as part of its cost-cutting procedures.

It obliges students to return their books by the end of each semester and charge those who damaged or didn't return the books a sum of BD1.5 for each book.

The public irritation had pushed the Ministry to instruct all public schools to replace the damaged books back then. But not this year, as the Ministry firmly said in a statement issued recently that it had printed around four million books this year and provided 353 different



Dr. Mohammed Juma

books online. Last but not least, Bahraini Social Activist Hamad Al Kooheji said in a video addressed to Education Minister Dr. Majid Al Nuaimi, "Your Excellency. You have been in the Ministry for twenty years and repeatedly stated that the Bahraini student is the Ministry's top priority. But the student, who's the top priority, received books that are damaged and not fit for studying. The books have phrases and drawings on them that are not related to the educational process."

## Preserving or saving costs?

The Ministry, however, continues to justify the distribution of used books saying the decision was taken

for "the greater good"

"The Ministry has a comprehensive plan to provide educational books for all public education for free. A huge budget is annually set to pursue this purpose. The ministry follows three methods in this regard that include printing millions of books, reusing undamaged books and expanding in the field of digital education by providing digital books on the ministry's website," Resources and Services Undersecretary Dr. Mohammed Juma commented.

Dr. Juma confirmed that the cost of printing new books this year is BD2 million, adding that the ministry distributed 270,000 books among private schools that include the four nationalism educational subjects.

The official insisted that the ministry is keen on promoting the culture of preserving educational books among students in Bahrain so more pupils could benefit from them, hence the reuse of books policy has been followed for the second consecutive year.

"In light of the orientation of rationalisation of expenditures, and in line with the Ministry's policy to promote the culture of taking care of books by students and to maintain it as an educational value, the Ministry issued circulars stressing the need to retrieve books by the end of

each semester with emphasis on care of the book and not to distort it to ensure its reuse for more school years. School activities have been organised to spread the culture of preserving books and to educate the students and parents about the importance of this matter. Therefore, clear mechanisms were established for retrieving the books and redistributing them among students," Dr. Juma said in a statement issued here yesterday.

He clarified that work teams and committees have been formed by the ministry and were tasked to follow up on the distribution of used books and to note any suggestions or complaints in this regard.

"Considering the millions of books distributed to students in public schools, there is a possibility of a small number of copies of the used books, which may have some defects. After ensuring the invalidity of these books, if any, the concerned committee will take care of the matter and address such cases that may emerge amidst the large number of books distributed to students. There has been a significant improvement this year, compared to last year, in regards to the validity of books retrieved and distributed. This indicates the cooperation of students and their parents in maintaining the books," the undersecretary added.



The newly printed textbooks which are in good shape